

City of Riverside Planning Department



Researching a Historic Property

People research historic properties for many reasons. Property owners may want to know the original use of a building, who occupied it, and what alterations have been made over time. Research will not only help provide important information for restoration and rehabilitation projects, but also forms the basis for evaluating the significance of a property and whether or not it is eligible for historic designation. When researching keep in mind that you will be developing a narrative history and determining where your property fits into the city's history and development. Properties can be individually significant, but may also derive significance as part of a neighborhood or historic district.

The following are questions to keep in mind when researching your historic property:

- ▶ What is the historic name of the property?
- ▶ How many buildings, structures, and other resources make up the property?
- ▶ What are the construction dates?
- ▶ What is the architectural style(s)?
- ▶ Who was the architect and builder? Are either well known for their skill or expertise?
- ▶ Does the property include a rare building or property type, or is it representative of many other properties in its vicinity?
- ▶ Is it a fine example of a style, craftsmanship or details?
- ▶ What changes have been made over time and when?
- ▶ How large is the property? Where is it located, and what are its boundaries?
- ▶ What is the development history of the area? How does it relate to a tract or subdivision developed during a particular period of time?
- ▶ Was a landscape architect associated with the property?
- ▶ Are there significant landscape features such as retaining walls and trees?
- ▶ What is the current condition of the property, including the exterior, grounds, setting, and interior?
- ▶ How was the property used during its period of significance and how is it used today?
- ▶ Who occupied or used the property historically? Did they individually make any important contributions to history?
- ▶ How does the property relate to Riverside's history and development?
- ▶ Were there any important events that occurred at the property?
- ▶ Was there a community function or group associated with the property?
- ▶ Does the property have important ethnic/cultural associations?

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For Questions Contact the Historic Preservation Specialist
3900 Main Street, Riverside, CA 92522
telephone (909) 826-5463, facsimile (909) 826-5622

RESEARCH “BEST BETS”

1. Historic Resources Inventory Database: Your property may have already been researched as part of a survey project completed by the City. This information can be accessed online.
2. Riverside City Directories: City directories are useful for tracing the history of ownership, occupancy, and use of a building.
3. Building Permits: Original building permits will tell you when a property was built, what was constructed on the property (i.e. residence and garage), architect, builder, owner and cost. Subsequent permits will tell you what changes have been made to the property over time. Building permits can now be accessed online at [\(link\)](#)
4. Sanborn Maps: Published by the Sanborn Map Company, these historical maps have building footprints and indicate building materials, number of stories, and other information. By viewing Sanborn Maps published over time, you may be able to determine an approximate construction date (if no original building permits are available) as well as alterations and additions to a property.
5. Historic Photographs and Postcards: These will help you determine changes to the property over time, and are an important resource for restoration projects.

RESEARCH LOCATIONS

The following is a list of the most common research locations within the City of Riverside and a list of some of the types of materials included in the collections:

Riverside City Planning Department, 3900 Main Street, 3rd Floor

The Planning Department has a database of historic properties that have been surveyed by the City as well as hard copy files arranged by address. These files may include photographs and other information relating to the property history.

The Planning Department also has:

- Reports relating to specific projects
- Sanborn Maps (photocopies)
- Books and other materials relating to Riverside history
- Resource materials on identifying architectural styles
- Index to address changes
- Index to street name changes

Public Works Department, 3900 Main Street, 3rd Floor

The Public Works Department has original tract maps. These can be used to trace development of a neighborhood or area.

Riverside Municipal Museum, 3580 Mission Inn Avenue

The Municipal Museum history collection is available by appointment only (826-5273). Research sources include:

- Sanborn Maps (originals)
- Historic Photographs
- Subject Files
- Architectural drawings/plans

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Riverside Public Library/Local History Resources Center, 3581 Mission Inn Avenue

The Local History Resource Center is open to the public during regular library hours of operation. The collection includes:

- Sanborn Maps (microfilm)
- Historic Photographs
- Historic Postcards
- City Directories
- Subject Files
- Newspaper articles
- Books and other publications relating to Riverside history
- Historical Maps

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